

REMARKS

The election of the invention defined by claims 16-27 for prosecution is hereby affirmed. Reconsideration of the requirement for restriction is requested, however, and all claims are being retained in this application at the present time. Claims 1-27, therefore, are currently pending in this application.

The Examiner states that invention I (claims 1-15) "involves steps of performing a coating process on a veneer formed by slicing wood, and preparing a veneer sheet by bonding." The Examiner further states that invention II "is a process of using the product made by utilizing a source of light." Neither of these statements, however, constitutes the showing particularly required by MPEP §806.05(f).

Reconsideration of the Examiner's characterization of invention I (claims 1-15) and invention II (claims 16-27) as "mutually exclusive species in an intermediate-final product relationship" is also requested. A method of manufacturing a wood-based decorative article as defined by claims 1-15 clearly is neither an intermediate product nor a final product.

Claim 16 is rejected, along with various dependent claims, as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,989,657 to Würz et al. Reconsideration is requested.

A wood-based decorative article according to the invention presently defined by claim 16 comprises a veneer,

formed by slicing wood and having a transparent property, and a substrate formed of a transparent synthetic resin and joined to a rear surface of the veneer. Since the veneer has a transparent property and the substrate formed of the transparent synthetic resin is arranged on the rear surface side of the veneer, light is allowed to pass through not only the veneer but also the substrate on the rear surface side of the veneer. Consequently, in contrast with a conventional wood-based decorative article, the present wood-based decorative article has a unique and beautiful finish, enhancing the perception of depth and the glossy feel of the veneer as discussed in lines 19-31 on page 13 of the specification.

The Würz et al. patent, by contrast, discloses a trim strip used to cover the edge of a décor-faced board of plywood, particle board, or the like. The trim strip shown in Figure 1 has a relatively thick transparent layer 1 of plastic, and a relatively thin opaque décor layer 2 arranged on the rear surface of the transparent layer 1.

The Würz et al. transparent layer 1 and décor layer 2 correspond to the substrate and the veneer, respectively, of the present invention. However, the veneer of the present invention has a transparent property, while the décor layer 2 of the Würz et al. trim strip is opaque. Also, in the present invention, the substrate is arranged on the rear surface side of the veneer, while in the Würz et al. trim strip, the

transparent layer 1 is arranged on the outer (front) surface side of the décor layer 2. These differences arise because the Würz et al. transparent layer 1 is used to protect the décor layer 2 and to make the décor layer 2 visible through the transparent layer 1.

The Würz et al. patent shows, in Figures 2 and 3, a second trim strip having a second transparent layer 1a of plastic arranged on the outer surface of the transparent layer 1a, and a second décor layer 2a arranged on the outer surface of the second transparent layer 1a. This second décor layer 2a is also opaque. Light is thus not allowed to pass through the second décor layer 2a, and, therefore, it is impossible to obtain the advantages of the present invention as mentioned above.

In section 4 on page 3 of the Office Action, the Examiner states that the Würz et al. patent discloses a trim strip having a veneer 8 formed by slicing wood, and a substrate formed of a transparent synthetic resin or layer 1 and joined to a rear surface of the veneer 8. However, the Würz et al. veneer 8 is not a part of the trim strip, and covers a particleboard 7 so as to constitute, together with the particleboard 7, the décor-faced board. It is the opaque particleboard and not the transparent layer 1 that is arranged on the rear surface of the veneer 8 in the Würz et al. patent.

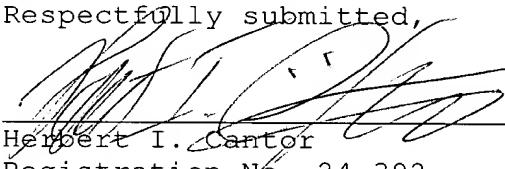
Again, the Würz et al. patent fails to disclose or suggest a veneer having a transparent property and a substrate

formed of a transparent synthetic resin and joined to a rear surface of the veneer as recited in currently amended claim 16. U.S. Patent 6,439,731 to Johnson et al. and U.S. Patent 6,156,411 to Jennings fail to suggest modifying the Würz et al. trim strip so as to include the features mentioned, and currently amended claim 16 is patentable. Dependent claims 17-27 are also patentable.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,

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